

QUICK INFORMATION SERIES

AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY

SOUTH INDIA

THE TELUGU MISSION

1. A People Without a Country



THE Telugus are supposed to be descendants of one of the ancient races of India, but now they have no country called by their own name. They occupy a territory in South India somewhat larger than New England in area, and extending from a point near Madras northward a distance of 500 miles. In population they number about 20,000,000. "If that man had a white face, he would

be the image of my father," exclaimed one of our missionaries after meeting a certain Telugu. Their skin is very dark, but their features are strikingly Caucasian. They live in a region often visited by famine, and many of them are very poor; however, they manifest such trustfulness and dependence that they are spoken of as a "nation of children."

2. Hinduism

The religion of the Telugus is the Hinduism of India. Its idolatry is bewildering, claiming to recognize 330,000,000 gods, whose images are hideous and revolting. The cruel-

ties of the system tend to destroy all human feeling. It is inexpressibly vile and degrading, yet from among these idolaters God has claimed a people for himself. Paul might say to the Telugu Christians as he did to the Corinthians, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus."

3. The Story of the "Lone Star"

In 1835 Rev. Amos Sutton, an English Baptist missionary of Orissa, was in this country and spoke before the Triennial Convention at Richmond. His earnest appeal to American Baptists to establish a mission among the Telugus received a favorable response. Rev. Samuel Day, the first missionary who was sent out, settled at Nellore, which for 26 years was the only station of the mission.

The Weary Waiting

The Telugus did not receive the gospel readily. Year after year went by, and scarcely a convert was gained. Of the little church of seven members in 1846, only two were Telugus, and Mr. Day was compelled to leave them and come to America on account of illness. A wonderful thing in the story of this mission is the way the missionaries loved the Telugus "while they were yet sinners." "Do not give up the mission," pleaded Mr. Day, "but give me a man to return with me;" and in response Lyman Jewett went with him in 1848.

The "Lone Star"

But those at home had not the faith of those on the field. A deputation from America, which visited Nellore, found such meager results that they were inclined to consider discontinuing the mission. The question came up for decision at Albany in 1853. One speaker said, pointing to a map where the stations were marked by stars, "There are many to care for the brilliant constellation in Burma, but who will care for the lone star of Nellore?" That phrase stirred the faith and poetic vision of Samuel F. Smith, and that night he wrote the hymn "Lone Star":

Shine on, "Lone Star," thy radiance bright
Shall spread o'er all the eastern sky.

It was then decided to reenforce the Telugu Mission.

Prayer Meeting Hill

Wonderful was the faith of those laborers! In 1854 Mr. Jewett and his wife visited Ongole with some native helpers. Upon the hill above the town they knelt in prayer. "Julia," said Mr. Jewett to his Bible woman, pointing to a spot near by, "would not that be a good place for a mission house?" In 1861 a house on that very place came into Mr. Jewett's possession, and Dr. Clough lived there when, later, he went to Ongole. Still the mission did not prosper, and in 1862 it was again proposed to abandon it. Mr. Jewett, then in this country, said that he would never abandon the Telugus, but would return and die there. "Well then," said the Secretary, "we must send somebody with you, to give you Christian burial." Rev. John E. Clough was appointed in 1864 and returned with Mr. Jewett.

"Ye See Your Calling"

Mr. Clough remained a short time in Nellore, but his particular destination was Ongole. There he organized the little church on January 1, 1876, with eight members. At first the caste people showed much interest, but they said, "If the outcastes are received, we must go away." A crisis was at hand, but in a providential manner the attention of the missionary was called to the words of Paul, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called"; and so he decided to preach to all who would listen, regardless of class.

The Great Ingathering

In 1877 there came a great famine. Missionary work gave way to efforts to save the lives of the people. Now the gospel seed, so faithfully sown for many years, began to bear fruit. Hundreds applied for baptism, but none were received, lest their motives might be unworthy. When the famine was over, Dr. Clough sent word for all candidates to meet him near Ongole. Six thousand came. Many were advised to wait, but the next day, July 3, 1878, 2,222 were baptized in the Gundalacumma River. Large numbers of baptisms continued every year until 1890, when another great revival

occurred. On December 28, 1890, 1,671 converts were baptized at Ongole, and nearly 10,000 altogether in various parts of the field in five months.

4. Changing Attitude of the Caste People

The people of the great Sudra caste, the middle class, are showing remarkable friendliness in many places, not only towards the missionaries but also towards the hitherto despised native Christians. At several stations Sudras are openly becoming disciples and entering the churches, while large numbers have privately acknowledged themselves Christians, but fear to break their caste relationships. Even the Brahmins in several places are laying aside their supercilious air of superiority and are showing respect and friendliness to the Christians. Large ingatherings from the caste peoples may be expected before long.

5. Development

The large ingatherings have necessitated careful division of the field, the opening of many new stations and the sending of a large number of missionaries. Educational, industrial and medical work have been the natural outgrowth of the great harvest. The Ramapatnam Theological Seminary and the high schools are doing a great work among our young people, while schools of lower grades for both boys and girls are laying broad foundations. Industrial work is yet in the experimental stage, and ways and means for promoting self-support call for much prayerful consideration. That they in their poverty support a home mission society and a foreign mission in Natal, is inspiring to us, and proves how God has rewarded the faith of the early missionaries and the efforts of those laboring there in later years.

Contributions for the work of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society may be sent to any of the District Secretaries, or to the Treasurer, Box 41, Boston, Mass.

Address the Literature Department, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Box 41, Boston, Mass., for the following :—

Extra copies of this leaflet. Price per doz., 5 cents; per hundred, 25 cents.

An historical leaflet, "Missions in South India." Price, 10 cents.

"The Revival in India." Price, 3 cents.

Catalog of Publications. Free.

Handbook of the Foreign Mission Society. Price, 20 cents.

Annual Report of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Free, on receipt of 6 cents for postage.
